

VZCZCXRO2465  
RR RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM  
DE RUEHHI #1034/01 1521036  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 011036Z JUN 07  
FM AMEMBASSY HANOI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5536  
INFO RUEHHM/AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH 3156  
RUEHXS/ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HANOI 001034

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/MLS

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [PREL](#) [CH](#) [VM](#)

SUBJECT: ELECTION SHOCKER: COMMUNIST PARTY COMES OUT ON TOP  
REF :A) HANOI 921; B) HCMC 579; C) HCMC 548

HANOI 00001034 001.2 OF 002

Summary  
-----

¶1. (SBU) On May 29, the National Assembly released the results of its May 20 election, and the make-up of the legislature will not differ markedly from the previous assembly: of the 497 seats in the body, non-Communist Party candidates won 43 seats, women 127 seats and ethnic minorities 87 seats. Furthermore, only one of the 30 self-nominated candidates was elected. The first task for this 12th National Assembly, which is expected to convene its first session in late July, will be to approve a new cabinet. The Communist Party clearly stuck to its plan to "ensure the political safety of the election, preventing all violations of the law and fighting abuse." With more than half of the new assembly "freshmen," it may take some time for the legislature to find its bearings, but we expect it to continue to play an increasingly vocal government oversight role.  
End Summary.

The NA's New Faces  
-----

¶2. (SBU) On May 29, the National Assembly (NA) announced the results of its May 20 election. With over 99 percent of Vietnam's over 56 million eligible voters casting ballots, the results were similar to those of the last election in 2002. 493 candidates (out of a total of 875 candidates) won seats and, to no one's surprise, Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) leading lights, including Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung, Party Chief Nong Duc Manh, President Nguyen Minh Triet and NA Chairman Nguyen Phu Trong were handily returned. Non-Party candidates won 43 seats (almost 9 percent), women took 127 seats (about 26 percent) and ethnic minorities won 87 seats (nearly 18 percent). Only one out of the 30 self-nominated candidates won. Some 355 deputies (or 72 percent, as in 2002) in the new legislature -- the 12th National Assembly -- will be freshmen. The 11th NA consisted of 51 non-Party members, 136 women and 86 ethnic minorities, and this time fewer business representatives won seats (14 from the private sector and 12 from the state sector).

¶3. (SBU) On May 30, General Secretary of the Electoral Council Bui Ngoc Thanh said some of the above-mentioned statistics fell below "targets." The GVN had hoped to get 50 non-Party members as delegates, while women had been expected to win 150 seats of the new NA, Thanh said. The National Assembly also expected at least 160 delegates from the 11th NA to be re-elected (only 138 were returned).

¶4. (SBU) Twelve out of the 165 candidates nominated by central government and Party offices failed to win seats, a record number. In previous elections, Vietnam experienced isolated incidents of centrally-nominated candidates failing to win. The Electoral

Council's Thanh took pains to point out that, this time, some actively serving GVN officials lost. He attributed their defeats to their poor policy platforms and/or lack of professional skills and highlighted the fact that three centrally-nominated candidates failed to win seats in Ho Chi Minh City. One of these candidates currently is a Vice Chairman of the State Securities Commission, and he is seen as a relatively progressive candidate by HCMC contacts. A number of other progressive local figures in HCMC also failed to win.

15. (SBU) According to longtime political watcher Tran Nhung, a Deputy Editor-in-Chief of the Veteran Affairs Journal, the fact that some centrally-nominated candidates did not win is a sign of "improved democracy" in Vietnam. Nowadays, common citizens do not blindly follow CPV instructions, he asserted. However, it is a pity that the CPV did not allow more independent or self-nominated candidates run in the election. Furthermore, a number of highly respected Party members from intellectual circles might have won had they been allowed to run, Nhung added, citing the example of the outspoken, but popular and capable former Vice Minister of Natural Resources and Environment Dang Hung Vo. The GVN blundered in not taking advantage of these people's skills; they would have given the NA a "totally different make-up," Nhung told Poloff.

Looking Ahead  
-----

16. (SBU) The 12th NA is scheduled to convene its first session this July. The first task for the new NA will be the approval of a new cabinet (expected to be announced later this month). The deputies are expected to "reappoint" Triet, Dzung and Trong. However, current ministers and vice ministers who were elected to the CPV's Central Committee at the April 2006 10th Party Congress are expected to get higher positions in the new Government, while those who failed to be elected to, or to remain on, the Central Committee will likely step down, according to Nhung. At this first session, deputies also are expected to discuss a report on the country's

HANOI 00001034 002.2 OF 002

socio-economic state, as well as overall development targets for 2007.

Comment  
-----

17. (SBU) A Poliburo resolution issued months before the May 20 election tasked the Party to "ensure the political safety of the election, preventing all violations of the law and fighting the abuse of rights and plots aimed at tarnishing the poll." The Party clearly stuck to its plan. The CPV ensured that dissidents who had become more vocal about the need for political change did not disrupt the election and it painstakingly vetted all NA candidates. That said, the last NA gradually strengthened its oversight role, grilling ministers about their policies and staffing choices. We expect the 12th NA to continue this role, although it may take time for the new, and still inexperienced, members to get their bearings.  
End Comment.

MARINE